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THE OUTLOOK FOR IRELAND.

BY THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF CREWE (LORD HOUGHTON),
LATE LORD LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF IRELAND.

THE political revolution of July, and the utter rout, for the time being, of the Liberal party, have engaged public attention, to the exclusion of other topics during the last six weeks. The ingenuity of publicists and partisans exhausts itself in an endeavor to apportion aright blame for the Liberal defeat, and to forecast its results for the next few years to come. The purpose of the present article is simply to discuss its effect upon Irish parties, and upon the government of Ireland, in the light of some recent experience gained in the country itself.

In the first place it must be noted that amid the crash of parties, Ireland stands where she did; the changes in her representation are microscopic, and the constitutional demand for Home Rule is presented by a slightly reinforced host of Nationalist members. The very obviousness of this fact, and the certainty with which it was foreseen, may cause its significance to be forgotten; but let it be remarked, once for all, that of the different proposals, applying to distinct portions of the British Islands, which formed and still form part of the Liberal programme, Home Rule is preëminently the one the position of which the general election of 1895, has done least to affect, as regards the district specially concerned. Fence with the matter as you will, the return of 83 Irish Home Rulers against 20 adherents of legislative union, forbids the most light-hearted Conservative to boast that there is no Irish constitutional question left unsolved.

It is, however, the commonplace of the moment—the easy resort of official optimism—to assert that the eyes of Irishmen are fixed on the passing of a Land Bill, and not on political de-

velopments towards self-government. There is enough truth in the statement to make it worth while to expose its essential one-sidedness. In the first place it leaves out of account the townsfolk, whose interest in a Land Bill is extremely remote, but who yet maintain the Nationalist faith unimpaired, and often in the more extreme forms. Again, it lays undue stress upon the force, great though it be, with which appeal can to-day be made to the pocket of a class. It is, indeed, assumed by many politicians of the baser sort, and half credited by some who ought to know better, that not only in Ireland, but in England, Scotland, and Wales as well, the jingling of the guinea is the only music for your voters' ear. Lowered rates, grants in aid, old age pensions—these are the only wares for the shop window, according as landowner, or farmer, or artisan is to be tempted in to buy. “Freedom leaning on her spear” must have a cheque book in her pocket or she will attract little notice. Perhaps there are a few people left who will decline to believe that enthusiasm for a political idea is now an impossibility, or that the spirit is dead which destroyed slavery (though nobody was a penny the richer), and which set the whole country ablaze when the story of Bulgaria's wrongs was told.

There are, no doubt, in Ireland as elsewhere, some minds who recognize no higher appeal than the gain of the instant. There were a few Venetians, perhaps, and a few Hungarians, who would cheerfully have accepted Austrian domination in consideration for a rise of wages. To compare any English government of to-day with the Imperial government of '48 would of course be unfair; but on the other hand, the administration of Hungary to-day, far more popular and sympathetic than that of Ireland, has not abated a jot of Magyar pretension to self-government.

It is, in fact, on the divisions in the Irish Nationalist Party, and upon them alone, that Unionists, who know Ireland, rely for the weakening of the popular demand. Some examination of these disputes, their causes, and their effect on public opinion in England and Ireland may not be altogether out of place. It is possible to extract three main elements of difference from the mass of mutual recrimination which crowds the Irish press: (1) resentment of the treatment of Mr. Parnell in 1886; (2) personal disputes, sometimes founded on incompatibility of political temper, sometimes, but seldom, on actual divergence of opinion and ac-

tion on current questions ; and (3) the clash of clerical and anti-clerical sentiment.

The essence of the whole matter is to determine whether any or all of these grounds of quarrel are in their nature permanent, for it may be taken as absolutely certain that, so long as they exist, the passing of a Home Rule measure will be impossible.

(1). It seems scarcely conceivable that the fight should forever sway round the memory of the dead Irish leader. An unprejudiced looker-on may be allowed to admit that Mr. Parnell received in some respects hard measure from his colleagues and followers, not so much in the fact of his dismissal as in the manner of it. Such an observer may also be permitted an expression of sincere regret over the disappearance from public life of a supremely interesting and in many ways admirable figure. The might-have-beens of politics are sometimes curiously fascinating and it is difficult to decide what would have happened could the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland have tacitly admitted the somewhat dangerous doctrine that high public services may act as a set-off against private irregularities. How far a direct national defiance of Mr. Gladstone and of English public opinion might have aided or retarded the passage of Home Rule, is a matter on which everybody must form an independent judgment for himself.

It is perhaps easier to maintain that had Mr. Parnell bowed to the gale, and at once retired from the leadership, even the straitest critics would sooner or later have consented to regard his offence in the light of an "erratum," as Franklin professionally entitled a moral lapse of his own early days.

Ireland has been the victim of many cruel ironies, but it would surely be the cruellest of all, if the personality of Mr. Parnell were to offer a permanent obstacle to the success of the cause which he championed.

(2). It is not the purpose of this article to indulge in comments on the conduct or the language of individual public men in Ireland. Such criticisms would fall with an ill grace from one who has held the position of the writer. It is well, therefore, lightly to pass over the personal element which unluckily plays so prominent a part in the present controversy. No feature in the situation is more disheartening to an English friend of Ireland, but it is easy to overrate its significance. Mr. John

Morley has lately reminded us, with much force, that nothing is more likely to lead to the overstatement of a case or to intemperance in argument than lack of early training in the exercise of public functions, and he added that if many Irishmen are still thus unpractised it is England that should take the principal blame. This truth may well be borne in mind by those who sometimes miss from Irish polemics what Gibbon calls "the well-guarded declaration of discreet and dignified resentment."

Passing to strictly political subjects of dispute, by far the most important has been the difference of opinion between the followers of Mr. Redmond and those of Mr. McCarthy as to the proper attitude of Ireland towards the Liberal party. Within the ranks of the Federationists themselves opinions upon this point have not always been unanimous.

As time went on it became evident that the perfect independence of English parties originally maintained by Mr. Parnell, which Mr. Redmond favored during the sitting of the late Parliament, would be rendered difficult by the continued adhesion of the Liberals to the principle of Home Rule. Government by casually associated groups is alien to English parliamentary tradition. Mr. Parnell had not much experience of this particular difficulty, but even he more than once found it necessary to quit his attitude of frigid isolation. It was not, however, until the rejection of the Irish government bill by the House of Lords in 1893 that the severe test began. The question was then asked: Ought the Irish to support the government in carrying their British measures, or ought they, while admitting the loyalty of Mr. Gladstone to his declared policy, to exhibit once more their independence and their power by withdrawing aid from an administration unable to carry out its good intentions towards Ireland? The present writer, while gratefully recognizing the value of the support so honorably extended to the late government by the Irish party, frankly admits that from a Nationalist point of view there was at first sight much to be said for the alternative policy.

It may further be conceded that the result of the general election seems to uphold the soundness of this view. An earlier appeal to the country could scarcely have ended more disastrously for the cause of Home Rule.

But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that the dis-

missal of a Liberal government by the act of the Irish members would probably have thrown a breaking strain upon the Liberal party. Even though the Liberal leaders recognized that Mr. McCarthy and his followers were acting within their strict rights, and had again set Home Rule in the forefront of their proposals, the rank and file of the party might have so resented enforced reconsideration of the question, and the apparent abandonment of English measures, as altogether to endanger the existing alliance. True, the real blame ought to have been cast on the House of Lords, but it would have been the Irish hand which dealt the visible blow. It is, of course, open for Mr. Redmond to retort, as he probably would, that he for one does not want the Liberal alliance; but in that case one is entitled to ask in reply whether Mr. Redmond wants Home Rule, and how he proposes constitutionally to obtain it without the co-operation of one of the great English parties? As the matter now stands, the Liberal party, defeated and diminished as it is, is essentially a Home Rule party; and when its turn again comes to succeed to power, it must again face the question of Irish self-government.

There remains, it is true, still one alternative for Mr. Redmond in the hope of enlisting the sympathy of the Conservative party with his views and aims. We shall consider presently the possible outcome of the great Unionist triumph as affecting Ireland, but meanwhile it is not without amusement that onlookers have followed the phases of the flirtation between the Parnellite and Unionist parties.

It remains to consider how far the reunion of the Irish party is likely to be deferred by reason of actual and legitimate difference of opinion on policy and procedure. If anything will close the existing breaches, it will be the coming period of struggle with the serried forces of reaction. The main subject in dispute, which has been discussed above, disappears with the Liberal government. Between the Liberal opposition and the Irish party, relations of friendly concord will probably exist, but of a less intimate character than were suggested to both sides by the smallness of the government's majority in the late Parliament. On the whole, it seems likely that causes of offence between members of the Nationalist brigade will tend to become fewer, save under one head, with which we must next deal.

Mr. Lecky reminds us (vol. viii., p. 429) that "in the

strange irony of Irish history few things are more curious than the fact that it was the English government which persuaded the Catholic priests to take an active part in Irish politics, and to take part in them for the purpose of carrying the legislative union." It is something of an irony, too, which has "united English Liberalism with the Roman Catholic Church for the purpose of modifying that union"; but in the matter of mutual loyalty neither party has had cause to complain of the other. Still, that the Conservative party should never have succeeded in winning over to its side this isolated branch of the greatest conservative organization in Europe is a singular and instructive fact. So long as old Tory traditions held the field it might have been difficult to form an alliance, but the capture of the Roman Catholic Church would not have been unworthy of Mr. Disraeli's adroitness and enterprise. In some respects the task would have been easier in his day than now, before the north, then so Radical, was pledged to support the Unionist party; but signs are not now wanting, as we shall presently remark, that the Conservative chiefs of to-day may make some attempt of the kind. In that case the steadfast adherence of the hierarchy and priesthood to the popular party may be more severely tested than ever yet in the past; but the Church as a whole is little likely to forget its national character.

At this moment feeling is naturally running high between the League and Federation, on the ground of priestly interference with the recent elections. That such interference has been considerable, and in some cases excessive, at any rate to English Liberal eyes, may be at once granted. But it is important to remember the peculiar relation—half paternal, half fraternal—in which the country priest stands to his peasant parishioner. It would be strange if an intimacy so confidential, involving knowledge of the most private affairs, did not color the public dealings of a person subject to the influence of another.

During the late elections much ill-feeling has been awakened on this account, and it seems probable that as time goes on, the Parnellite section of the Nationalists will more and more be stamped with the character of an anti-clerical party. The existence of such a wing may be a misfortune, so far as it tends to present disunion; but in an Irish parliament where, as we are always being reminded, Rome Rule is dreaded under the name of

Home Rule, it would play an important part by representing the element of Continental Liberalism in social and domestic politics.

The conclusion appears then to be this : That so far as the internal differences of the Nationalist Party depend on devotion to the memory of Mr. Parnell, or on the attitude of Ireland toward English parties, they will tend to diminish. Whereas, as between clerical and anti-clerical opinion the line of demarcation is likely to become sharper.

As between Nationalist and Unionist, no very marked change seems likely to take place at present; there will be plenty of wild talk on both sides, but there is far less personal difference than is sometimes imagined. Of course, feeling runs high in Belfast, and higher still in some of the northern towns in which the number of Catholics and Protestants is almost equal. Here and there one hears of an event which comes as an agreeable surprise, as when in a North-Midland county, one recent 12th of July, the local Nationalists lent to a gathering of two thousand Orangemen their big drum, the prime requisite on such an occasion, and sent cars for conveyance of those attending the meeting. But such Arcadian amity is rare, though outside Ulster, in the districts where Protestants are in a small minority, good humored relations are the rule, except where well-meaning but ill-balanced persons have embarked on the futile campaign of religious proselytism. If, then—as surely is the case—the failure of the Liberal Party to carry Home Rule has in no way reconciled the Irish majority to the existing methods of government, and if the fissures in that majority are, on the whole, more likely to close than to widen as time goes on, what prospect has the new ministry of a continued period of order and of comparative contentment?

The answer is humiliating enough, seeing that the great British Empire has to make it. In the immediate future the apathy of Ireland, and therefore to some extent a quietude of the House of Commons, will mainly depend on two conditions, one positive and one negative, over neither of which the government will have a shadow of control. There must be fine weather, and no popular leader must arise to unite the Nationalist forces.

During the past three years of liberal administration, the remarkable peace of the country was in part due, it may be hoped, to a sympathetic method of government which made no terms

with crime but which tried to enlist the best popular forces on the side of order. Nevertheless it would be absurd to deny that the task was made infinitely easier than it might have been by the material prosperity which prevailed till the spring of this year, and was then disturbed in isolated localities only.

Again, Unionist England, as she values her repose, must remain fettered by the undignified necessity of beseeching Providence not to raise up a new O'Connell or Parnell. At this moment the various sections of the Nationalist party include men of high character, men of brilliant eloquence, men of striking business capacity; it is an instance of the ill-luck which haunts Ireland that no one of them combines all the qualities needed for an Irish leader. England, in her secure and settled condition, does not ask for leaders. She requires public servants. These she uses to the utmost of their strength, gives them honor while they are alive, with money if they desire it, and buries them in Westminster Abbey when they are dead. But she reserves the right to criticise with utter frankness her most eminent sons, and if they displease her she is not above breaking their drawing-room windows. Ireland, on the other hand, as a nation who has suffered much, calls for a leader—the Liberator, the Chief. He must be a man to appeal to the imagination, either by the burning eloquence and masculine bonhomie of an O'Connell, or with the magnetic influence and mysterious aloofness of a Parnell. Such a leader—who knows?—is perhaps approaching manhood to-day and is dreaming dreams of an Ireland made prosperous and contented by his guidance, or, perhaps, unconscious of his destiny, he is now being wheeled in a perambulator along the pavements of Dublin or of Cork. At any rate, appear he will—by the ordinary law of averages, which allots a hero to every nation now and again—and, when he comes, the problem of how to govern Ireland, unless solved already, will once more thrust itself before the eyes of the weary predominant partner.

It remains to consider the possible attitude of each section of the Irish party towards the new government, and the policy which that government may thus be tempted or compelled to pursue.

It would be a fruitless task to prophesy concerning the Nationalist attitude in the House of Commons, towards an administration which up to the time of writing has made no coherent declaration of policy in Irish affairs.

Let us pass on to conjecture what direction Unionist tactics may probably take. It has long been believed in Ireland that if opportunity should offer, the Conservatives would attempt an experiment of their own and reorganize the details of Castle government, while maintaining the body of the present system. It was also imagined that if a Unionist government should assume office, Mr. Chamberlain would not consider the task beneath his great abilities, and that he would make his first appearance in the unaccustomed character of conciliator. The experiment is not likely to be made. The phrase "Clear out the Castle" has merits as an alliterative cry, but the task is one from which statesmen of wider experience than the present rulers of Ireland might well shrink. For that task is the substitution, for a non-popular but distinctly effective system, of some unknown scheme which by the hypothesis must be non-popular also, and for the smooth working of which there is no guarantee. Popular it cannot be, because the leaders of the popular party will have none of it. As it is, central control is the mainspring of Irish government. At one time it may be the Lord Lieutenant, at another the Chief Secretary or the Under Secretary, who undertakes the real work; but it always happens that one performer, or two, or three, play on the instrument while the rest of the official world blows the bellows. The system, like most centralized systems, possesses a certain attractiveness. That it works as well as it does is due in part to the fact that Dukes of Alva and Generals Hagnan are not found among English politicians of any shade of opinion; in part to the publicity, even though it be inaccurate, which attends the doings, great and small, of those in power, and in part to the real merits of the permanent officials in Ireland. It would be impossible for the writer not to bear testimony to the high services and admirable common sense of many of these gentlemen, upon whom the sins and shortcomings of their political chiefs have sometimes been unfairly visited. The real vices of the system are its rigidity, its failure to encourage self-reliance in subordinates, and its undue demand upon those who are called upon to control it. It is an undue demand because it predicates a perpetual succession of public men, endowed in the very finest degree with the qualities of impartiality, patience, and industry. More especially are remarkable governing qualities necessary for

the members of a Conservative administration of to-day, because the country has admittedly to be governed without the concurrence and in opposition to the wishes of its constitutional representatives. On the actions of such a government there is, in fact, no real parliamentary or other check.

It is not only in the domain of law and order, but in almost every department of an Irish citizen's life, that the central government has its eye on him. The government of Ireland is a government by boards, and the system, by diminishing personal responsibility, tends to throw control even more than might be into the hands of the political chiefs and their immediate entourage. The Local Government Board has three members, besides those who sit on it *ex-officio*. The Prisons Board has three, and among boards of a different class eight to nine members sit on the Congested Districts Board, and seventeen on the Board of National Education. The Board of Works, representing the Treasury in Ireland—as well as the Woods and Forests and the Board of Works proper—maintains towards the Irish government something of the attitude which an Indian resident might assume towards a powerful and well meaning, but occasionally indiscreet Maharajah; although friction has usually been avoided by the excellent personal terms which have existed between its head and the ministers of the day.

Such is the machine—not the machine which some of us might prefer, though by no means a bad machine in its way. Whether it would stand much tinkering is another question.

We have concluded, then, that it is doubtful if any advantageous attempt can be made to reorganize Irish government on the present lines. Possibly the present Ministers, declared opponents of political change though they be, may attempt to provide the country with a scheme of local government. Such a scheme, counting so many points to the good in the struggle for Home Rule, if freed from the grotesque features which distinguished its predecessor, ought to receive, and probably would receive, serious consideration from the Irish members. To begin at the wrong end is sometimes better than not beginning at all. But the problem of how to give any local control at all, without alarming the favored landowning class, to whose support the government is attracted, if not actually pledged, is a desperately difficult one to solve.

There are two other questions, each near boiling point, which await the declarations of the Tory government—the questions of Denominational Education and of the Land, to each of which the late Ministers directed anxious attention. This is not the place in which to discuss the technical and exceedingly complicated points which have arisen since, in 1892, the Chief Secretary was called upon to consider the question of certain elementary Roman Catholic schools. After an infinity of discussion between the Castle and the National Board of Education, those questions, relating mainly to the use of religious emblems, and of school books in which controversial matters are touched from the clerical standpoint, still remain undecided. Possibly a Conservative government, unfettered by a general belief in the impropriety of supporting centres of denominational education from public funds, may be able to terminate the tangle by cutting the knot. It may thus, as was stated above, win the gratitude, if not the support of the Roman communion, without alienating the Protestant Church of Ireland, whose peculiar interests may be specially safeguarded. In so doing it is certain to arouse the animosities, and alarm the prejudices, of the Non-conformist bodies of the North ; but secure in its great majority, it can perhaps afford to do so.

These bodies, too, as forming a large part of the Ulster tenant class, are above all other men concerned with the settlement of questions left open, or as they believe unfairly decided, by the Land Act of 1881, and by the subsequent construction of its provisions by the courts of law. It is assumed, and may be announced before these lines are in print, that action will be deferred until next year, by means of a short bill postponing the date at which applications for fixing a new rent may be lodged. Such procedure will afford longer time for speculation upon the character of a measure for which Mr. T. W. Russell and Mr. Macartney, both members of the new government, and hitherto hopelessly apart on land questions, will each be more or less responsible.

There may be some Irish landlords who look with little enthusiasm upon this transfer from Liberal to Conservative hands of the matter which chiefly concerns them. They may remark that possible concessions to the Roman Catholic Church on education may render it advisable to conciliate Northern Protestant opinion by free amendment of the land acts ; they may remember the un-

palatable measures of 1887 and 1891, the work of Lord Salisbury's former administration; and they may be fully assured that, protest as they will, English Conservative noble lords, so prompt to rush to their aid when a Liberal government is in office, will look on with apathy or a shrug while they are immolated upon the altar of party necessity, and a similar or perhaps stronger measure is genially introduced by Lord Ashbourne from the bench on the right of the throne.

Time alone can show how far the pressure of circumstances may force the hand of the government. Their principal aim, as we are told, is to preserve a dead calm over Ireland, and to give no single interest a handle for agitation. It stands to reason that the most "loyal," and therefore least assertive, classes are most likely to be driven to the wall, as being least able to resent or retaliate for severe treatment.

For the rest, a policy of conciliation may be based on a profuse expenditure from public funds. So long as the British taxpayer is willing to provide it, no friend of Ireland can object to the distribution of drafts on the Exchequer, if only they can be allotted without waste and without blighting the growth of the delicate plant self-help. In the past some public money has been wisely and profitably laid out, and a considerable amount has been entirely wasted. There are districts in Ireland in which the failure of a single crop means short commons to all and starvation to some. Here the ordinary operation of the poor law must be supplemented by grants from the general fund. On the other hand, the names of two places rise to the mind of the writer. Both have been largely assisted from public and private sources, and in each the result has been a marked lowering of the character of the inhabitants and a relaxation of their efforts to earn an independent living. It may be a strong temptation to earn some easy cheers from a smiling western crowd, and to see one's self belauded in the newspapers by some worthy priest for whom one has transformed the world by providing access to his parish. But these joys may be too dearly bought at the cost of weakening that spirit of self-reliance which it should be the object of all governments to develop.

Nobody can pass some years in Ireland, especially in an official capacity, without becoming alive to the folly of dogmatizing upon the future course of events in the country. Much uncer-

tainty must necessarily surround the immediate outcome of Irish politics. Neither English party is in a position to say that it can govern the country according to its desire. The Conservatives may at any moment be obliged to return to the exasperating methods of coercion, and to the weary see-saw of repression and reprisals. The Liberals, meanwhile, now frankly admit that Ireland cannot be permanently ruled by Englishmen of any party according to Irish ideas. Irish Nationalist ideas are by no means the same as English Liberal ideas, although a Liberal government, we hope, carries out its administrative duties in a more sympathetic and less alien spirit than do its opponents.

The Irish on their part will have need for the exercise of much patience and self-control. It is not easy to see what advantage is anticipated from a rather childish demonstration such as the return of the convict Daly for Limerick city. It is only right to mention that the cause of the dynamite prisoners generally, and of Daly in particular, is supported by many Irishmen and Irishwomen, who hold in abhorrence the dynamite creed, but believe the convict to be innocent; others again, while admitting at any rate the partial guilt of the prisoners, maintain they have been sufficiently punished by a considerable term of penal servitude. This is a point that may fairly be argued, but the election, said to be the reward of services to the Irish cause, seems to impale upon a dilemma those responsible for it. What were those services? Surely not the employment of dynamite? If, on the other hand, Daly be innocent, he is an exceedingly ill-used man, and should receive every possible apology and compensation that the law can offer. But it is not clear how even this supposition, in the absence of substantial and known political claims, is to qualify him for the representation of an important constituency.

We believe that the great Unionist triumph neither involves any abatement of Ireland's claims, nor an abandonment of her constitutional position. "Unfinished questions," it has been said, "have no pity for the repose of nations." Not very long ago it seemed likely that the Home Rule ship might make the harbor for which she was steering, but she was swept by the gale far out into the open sea. To retrace her course she must beat painfully against the wind; but she will reach home at last.

CREWE.